Don’t Leave Your Treasurer Crying in a Practice Room



A board member’s guide to helping your treasurer (and your organization) thrive

Jeff Kleinsorge, ISMTA Treasurer, MTNA Treasurer

How do we deal with money?

Board members make a real difference in whether the treasurer’s job feels manageable or impossible.



Providing Oversight



Asking Questions



Approving Clear Policies

Good governance is about consistently doing unglamorous things on purpose.

Don’t Let One Person Do It All

Make sure at least two people are involved in key financial processes so that no one person controls everything.

Your local association should create specific 1) **dollar thresholds,** and 2) **transaction categories,** that require review or approval by more than one person. The treasurer may be able to handle other day-to-day items on their own.

Common Unexpected Spending

Adopt a policy stating that any unbudgeted spending must be approved by the executive board, or by the full board in some cases.

Uncommon Unexpected Spending

Require a vote of the general membership in some extreme cases.

Check In on the Books



Ask to see reconciliations—the same basic checks you would do for your personal checking account.

What to Look For

- Bank reconciliations match the books
- Receipts and documentation are on file for expenses
- Deposits align with expected income
- When the work calls for specialized expertise, support outside professional help

Three More Ways to Help

1

Approve a Realistic Annual Budget

Adopt a budget policy that says you cannot spend money outside of or beyond the budget without prior board approval. (This policy only helps if the board uses it!)

2

Put It in Writing

Cover reimbursement, purchasing, cash handling, and record retention with clear written guidelines.

3

Ask for Reports You Can Actually Read

Review them before meetings.

Questions Worth Asking at Every Meeting

1. Is the organization on budget overall, or in a specific category that matters right now?
2. How do current finances compare with the same point last year?
3. Does the organization have enough cash for upcoming expenses?
4. How are funds for a designated project or issue being tracked?

No one plays alone.

We listen, we ask questions, we follow the score,

and we make decisions together.

Good financial leadership is good musicianship.

Frequently Asked Questions

? As a nonprofit, do we have to pay sales tax?

Historically, yes

? How do we deal with the bank?

With patience

? Do we need an audit?

An internal one, yes. A professional one, probably not.

? Does MTNA offer liability insurance?

Yes, and it’s free to you

A Bit of Advice

Try to avoid these things when working with your treasurer:

1. Don’t assume the treasurer knows why you sent whatever it is that you sent — name the project or office, the expense category, and the action you want taken.

2. Don’t assume the treasurer has all the necessary information — spell out amounts, addresses, and details, even if you think it’s overkill.

3. Don’t assume the treasurer knows your needs —tell or remind them early in the work cycle, not the night before.

4. Don’t begrudge the forms — they exist to eliminate misunderstandings and create the shared language a good ensemble needs.

Be explicit — faulty assumptions are what cause double payments and missed ones.



Your Treasurer Is a Collaborator, Not a Soloist

Good governance isn't glamorous—but it's the foundation of every organization that lasts.

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